

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Elana Straus, and I am a medical student at the Yale School of Medicine. I am writing in support of H.B. 6616, An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to those Ineligible due to Immigration Status.

Children, families, and all of Connecticut suffer when we deny people health insurance. Research has repeatedly shown that people who are uninsured are less likely to receive preventative care, get diagnosed with cancer at more aggressive stages, and have more severe outcomes for chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened these disparities, and there is no doubt that insurance gaps have contributed to spread of COVID and increased mortality for all. Furthermore, children who are uninsured miss more days of school, perform worse in the classroom, and have more unmet mental health needs compared to their insured peers. This is a policy choice. All of these impacts are avoidable.

When I work with patients at the HAVEN Clinic, which serves uninsured adults in New Haven, I see firsthand the devastating impact that a lack of health insurance has on undocumented children and their families. Delayed care, avoidable visits to the emergency room, and medical debt all take a toll on the hardworking families that we provide care to. I will always remember the fear and desperation that a parent expressed to me when they were trying to find care for their child's seizures but had few places to turn for help.

As a future healthcare provider, I hope to build my career in a state that stands up for the health of all of its residents and allows my colleagues and I to provide equitable care for all. In the last legislative session, our state took a huge step in expanding HUSKY to cover children up to age 12, and I urge you to vote yes on H.B. 6616 to continue this important progress.

A healthy, prosperous, and just future for Connecticut must include a right to health insurance for all, regardless of immigration status.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elana', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Elana Straus, Yale School of Medicine

